

antigovernment strikes). BAT held an event celebrating the boat's arrival, at which the mayor of Chittagong, among others, welcomed it to Bangladesh, explaining that while smoking was bad for health, he wished to support the country's economy. However, ticket sales for concerts and other events were repeatedly postponed, as BAT was aware that the events might be banned.

To the delight of the health community at home and abroad, the high court responded favourably to the petition, banning all further promotional activities around the voyage, declaring it illegal based on the 1990 law (unfortunately, the law did not seem to extend to other forms of tobacco advertising). As a result of the decision, the concerts and other events planned around the voyage were cancelled, and the associated newspaper advertisements that had been appearing every day were

stopped. The boat sailed away quietly a few days later.

The victory was by no means total. Billboards and display cases remained in place. Bangladesh Television (BTV), which does not otherwise show tobacco advertisements (they are banned on electronic media), repeatedly aired adverts for the voyage. The victory may have generated rancour against the health movement, as some young people in Chittagong expressed disappointment at the concerts being cancelled.

But the fight was not over. Tania Amir appeared in court repeatedly, along with the lawyer representing ADHUNIK. On 7 February, in response to writs filed by BATA and ADHUNIK, the high court reiterated that the voyage was illegal, and further declared that the government should ban the production and trade of tobacco. Although such a law would

clearly be unfeasible, the high court ruling did contain many workable measures that BATA has since been pursuing, starting with making the warnings on packs and billboards large enough for people to see, and then banning tobacco advertising and smoking in public places.

BATA realised that its work had only just begun, and made plans to expand, once it had become a legal body, and to recruit many more organisations to its ranks. A new wing has been created to address issues related to the health and economic effects of active and passive tobacco use among women. BATA is drafting model legislation for Bangladesh, in response to the high court's decision. It also planned a series of events around the country throughout May, to educate and inform the public about the dangers of tobacco and about industry practices, so that the public will support the growing anti-tobacco movement. In a country where 80% of people are Muslim, a religion that views tobacco as haram (illicit under the teachings of the Koran), BATA anticipates strong public support for its work.

While BATA gains from the tobacco control experience of some of the larger non-governmental organisations among its members, the involvement of a wide range of groups, bringing their own experience, strengths, and contacts, has been critical to its success so far. There is still a long way to go before any genuine victory against BAT, and tobacco in general, can be declared. However, with strong backing from the high court, and the establishment of an active alliance against tobacco, in place of the previous situation of scattered groups working on their own, one thing is clear: a real tobacco control movement is alive and well in Bangladesh.

DEBRA EFROYMSON  
Regional Advisor, PATH Canada,  
Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh  
pathCan@citechco.net



South African B&H/Cancer & Emphysema campaign: Cars belonging to Ken Shepherd, Tobacco Control Centre, bearing the logo Cancer & Emphysema, which create a stir wherever they go. They are reported to remind some people of a popular cigarette brand, which makes them controversial items to park near a genuine promotion for the brand.

## USA: the art of simple dying

What problems cigarette makers have in the USA these days! The modern American woman aspires to many fine ideals: to be in charge of her own life, stay looking young and beautiful as long as possible, keep fit and healthy, smell fragrant, be a good parent, and have enough money to enjoy life to the full. Smoking removes control through addiction, prematurely ages and wrinkles the skin, destroys fitness

and can cause debilitating and fatal diseases, makes smokers smell, sets an appalling example to children, and involves repeatedly spending money that could otherwise be used for, well, living life to the full. So how on earth can cigarette companies reassure women who smoke, and make those who have not yet started, think it is part of a normal, desirable lifestyle?

One way, it seems, is to give women their own magazine, cleverly mixing all the most enduring female aspirations and interests with pervasive imagery portraying smoking as a normal, rational activity, an integral part of the perceived ideal lifestyle of American women in the year 2000. Brown & Williamson, BAT's north American subsidiary, has done just that: it is funding a magazine misleadingly called *The Art of Simple Living*, that is apparently being sent, unsolicited, to women who subscribe to selfhelp and health and fitness publications.

Redolent of the American dream of happy married life, motherhood, and apple pie (the 21st century version), typical articles include "How to unclutter your emotional life", "Bird watching—a family affair", and even "Fitness loves company". Seen in their true context, some are sentimental to the point of nausea, outside the spectrum of even the cruellest satirist's palette, such as "Parent talk: wheel life episodes—a dad watches his girls grow up". Another fine example could have been tailored for those who lose a family member from tobacco: "Writing simple, touching notes for every occasion".

Cigarette advertisements abound—in one issue, all but two of the adverts are for cigarettes. There are competitions such as "Win a vacation in paradise", adverts for trinkets—"Express your own unique style with the Misty Rainbow Collection"—and not forgetting to flatter the intellect of readers, "The thinking person's crossword puzzle", part of a Carlton advert. And bowing to ever increasing hostile public reaction to passive smoking, we learn that "Superslim Capri means less smoke for those around you".

The publisher's statement says the magazine "is edited for a select audience of modern women who are interested in personal and spiritual growth, as well as in fulfilling their responsibilities to other people". So that's all right then. And financial support? This, the publishers admit, "is provided by the B&W Tobacco Corporation, which does not control editorial content. It is published for adult women". Despite the dis-

claimer, there are obvious links between much of the content and the kinds of concerns that women have, and the issues that are bound up with their smoking. And like some cigarette adverts, many of the articles counter women's concerns about smoking, such as those about fitness or parenting. There does not appear to be any way to subscribe to this publication, and even better news is that anyone who is sent it can ask to be removed from the "select Simple Living mailing list".

## Japan: streets unsafe as machines prey on children

Tobacco control advocates concerned with youth access issues should dread the negative utopia where underage smokers purchase cigarettes almost anytime and anywhere. Sadly, such a utopia exists in Japan where over 500 000 cigarette vending machines generate over 40% of the total sales of cigarettes (1997 figures).

Although most shopkeepers in Japan will willingly sell tobacco products directly to minors, they do not need to. Just outside the ubiquitous convenience stores and supermarkets, on virtually every urban street corner, and even at unattended locations on rural highways, tobacco vending machines give young people unlimited opportunity to buy tobacco products with no one watching.

This unrestricted access brings predictable results. The legal minimum age for the purchase of tobacco in Japan is 20 years. However, survey statistics published by the Japanese

Ministry of Health last November indicate high rates of underage smoking via several indicators. Most notably, 19% of 15 to 20 year old men, and 4.3% of 15 to 20 year old women, identified themselves as smokers. Moreover, although the survey avoided counting smokers younger than 15 years old, among all smokers in Japan, roughly 8% of men and 6% of women said they started to smoke before they were 15 years old. Overall, 42% of all male smokers and 35% of all female smokers reported becoming habitual smokers before their 20th birthdays.

Not surprisingly, vending machines have long been a point of contention relating to youth access in Japan. In 1996, the tobacco industry announced voluntary measures to shut down outdoor cigarette vending machines between 11 pm and 5 am. Announced as a measure to limit youth access, tobacco industry promoters were merely blowing smoke in the faces of tobacco control advocates.

One guesses that the late night shutdown was designed primarily to help retailers reduce vandalism, because it could not possibly have been a bona fide youth access remedy. Having no need to sneak out for their purchases, most of Japan's underage smokers were fast asleep during the early morning hours, not out wandering the streets.

Statistics make the story obvious. Japan's Tobacco Problems Information Centre estimates that minors consumed approximately three billion packs of cigarettes in 1996. This translates to roughly eight million packs obtained by minors each day. If late night vending machine operations



Cigarette vending machines on the streets of cities in Japan, like these ones seen in Kobe last November, make access easy for children.